

N^o 4
The Guilt, Mischief, and Aggravations
of CENSURE:

Set forth in a

S E R M O N

Preach'd in

St. George's Chapel,

WITHIN

Her Majesty's Castle of *WINDSOR*,

On Sunday the 25th of *June*, 1710.

By *THO. GODDARD*, A. M. Canon
of *Windsor*.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
Dutcheſs of Marlborough.

MADAM,

THE Honour Your Grace did me in Approving this Sermon when You heard it, in Commanding the Publication of it, and Allowing me to *Preſent* it to your ſelf, is too great to be refus'd. I ſhould not have thought it worthy of theſe, but for Your Grace's Approbation of it; nor have I dur'd to have ſent it abroad, but under ſuch a Protection.

THE Occaſion of my preaching it was from an Indignation I had to ſee the Impreſſion that has been made on ſome of the People to the Prejudice of the Adminiſtration by a Courſe of Slander, and the worſe Deſign grafted on it of ſtriking at the Juſtice of the Revolution. When they had endeavour'd to render Her Maſeſty's Adminiſtration odious, then was it thought a proper Time openly to attack a Fundamental Principle of the Revolution. This muſt be done under a Pretence of Loyalty to the Queen, and a mighty Zeal was ſhewn for Her Maſeſty's Hereditary Title to the Crown, on purpoſe to caſt a Reflection on the Act of Settlement.

I am far from charging the Generality of the People with an ill Meaning in it. A few cunning Heads will lead great Numbers after 'em, who do not ſee into the Conſequences of what they do. They are told the Church is in Danger, that there is a Deſign to alter the Form of the Government, and to introduce a Republick; can the People be blam'd if they do any thing they

The Dedication.

are inform'd will *extricate* 'em out of these *Dangers*.
No : The Fault is in those that tell 'em so, if it be *true* ; and if it be, I am content to be call'd the *SLANDERER*.

WHEN there is a *Pretender* to Her Majesty's *Crown* it is not a *Time* to *disavow* any *JUST Title* she has to it, as I doubt not that is which she has from the *Act of Settlement*, as well as the *Hereditary*. It was the only one King *William* of *GLORIOUS MEMORY* had ; and since it was not in *His*, I hope it will not be *disputed* in Her Majesty's *Reign*. I ask Your Grace's Pardon for laying this before You, which is so well known to Your Grace already.

I Beseech God *long* to preserve the *QUEEN* to be a *Blessing* to the *Nation*, and to make all Her Subjects sensible of the great *Benefits* and *Advantages* they have under Her Majesty's *Administration* : and as He has particularly own'd the *Justice* of Her *Title*, by giving the most *constant* Success to Her *Arms* ; so may the general *Thankfulness* of the whole Kingdom for the *Happiness* and *Security* they enjoy under Her Majesty's *Reign* be seen in a dutiful *Submission*, and *unreserv'd Obedience* to Her *Government*.

MAY the *Duke* of *MARLBOROUGH* and Your Grace *long live* to reap the *Fruits* of His *Great Services* to the *Country* ; and as you have been *eminently distinguished* by the *Blessings* of God in *this World*, so may you be proportionably *happy* in the *next*. This is the earnest *Prayer* of,

M A D A M,

Your Grace's most Obedient,

and most Humble Servant,

Windsor, June the
26th, 1710.

Tho. Goddard

JAMES III. 1.

My Brethren, Be not many Masters.

THE Word διδάσκαλοι, which in my Text is translated *Masters*, properly signifies *Teachers*, and the Apostle means by it such as assume to themselves a Power of *Censuring* and finding Fault with every thing that is not just according to their own Notion and Model of Things.

As it is every one's Duty to *Exhort, Reprove, Rebuke* those that are in any Degree of Subjection to him, when they transgress their known Duty; so 'tis an unpardonable Fault to be *censuring* and *judging* other Mens Actions who are no ways under our Government, upon every supposed and imaginary Neglect of it.

In the 23^d Chapter of St. *Matthew*, when our Saviour had condemn'd the Scribes and Pharisees Affectation to be call'd *Rabbi, Rabbi, Master, Master*, he cautions his Hearers not to arrogate to themselves those Names, *Ver. 8. But be ye not called Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are Brethren.* And likewise at the 10th Verse, *Neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.* These Texts give Light to the Apostle's Meaning, when he commands us not to be many *Masters*, knowing, says he, *that ye shall receive the greater Condemnation*; that is, Do ye not presume to *censure* and *judge* one another here, because ye are all reserv'd to a greater *Judgment* hereafter. When the Lord *Jesus* shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, then is the proper Time for *Judgment*. He is your *only Master* now, and will be your *only Judge*.

St. *James* in this Chapter shews both the *Difficulty* and *Necessity* of bridling the *Tongue*, a Member of great Use and Advantage to us when rightly order'd and govern'd, for therewith *bless* we God: but a very unruly Evil, and full of deadly Poyson, when indiscreetly manag'd; for therewith also *curse* we Men, who are made after the Similitude of God. That part of the Misgovernment of the *Tongue*, which the Apostle chiefly design'd to reform by this Chapter, is rash *Censure* or *judging* other Mens Actions, which fall not under our Cognizance, and belong not to our Jurisdiction; a setting on selves up as the *Masters, Teachers, and Judges* of all Men, so that nothing shall happen within the compass of our Knowledge, but

but we shall examine it as critically, and censure it as confidently, as if we were the *proper* and *only Judges* of it; not considering that we our selves are Men, and upon that account not only *incapable* Judges of it thro' the Shortness of our Faculties, but also *improper* ones, because we are liable to the same Faults, and reserv'd to the same Judgment.

This Sin, how odious soever in the Apostle's time, seems to have gain'd great Reputation in ours, there having never been at any time so general a Liberty taken in *judging uncharitably* of other Men, as now. Instead of leaving one another to the just Judgment of God, Men seem to claim that Power themselves, not only arraigning their *Actions*, but also their very *Thoughts* and *Designs*. In order therefore, as far as in me lies, to oppose so prevailing and dangerous a Sin, I shall in the following Discourse endeavour to discover the *Malignity*, and set forth the *Aggravations* of it.

And *Censure* has then the Nature of Sin, when it is rash and inconsiderate, when we give too easy credit to what we hear, and by confirming the Belief of other Mens Lies, really, tho' rashly and unadvisedly, become the Authors of 'em; and this is properly Censure.

2dly. When our *Censure*, being false and unjust, is attended with *Slander*, and made subservient to the base Designs of *Hatred* and *Envy*, it is distinguish'd by the Name of *Calumny*.

Both these kinds of *Scandal* are justly hateful and abominable; and tho' the former be of a less flagrant Nature than the latter, yet the ill Consequence of them both being the same in the *Injury* done to Mens Credit, they can no otherwise be distinguish'd than according to the Degree of *Malice* that accompanies 'em.

And this Vice will appear to be attended with sufficient *Guilt*, by shewing you that 'tis compounded of the two chief Ingredients of the Devil's Nature, Pride and Malice, the one the Cause of his Fall, the other his Employment ever since.

The arrogant and overweening Conceit some Men have of themselves, sets 'em upon a strict Survey of other Mens Actions, with a design to set themselves off by their Errors and Failures, upon a false Supposition, that the less Esteem they have, the more will fall to their own share. They think they can't appear to advantage, whilst others have any Pretence to Regard; so that in order to raise their own Credit, they pull down their Neighbours Reputation, founding their own on the Ruins of it. This sets 'em upon the base Acts of *Detraction* and *Defamation*, and if they can't find real Scandal enough to sully their Adversary's Character, their *Malice* quickens

tickens their *Invention*, and furnishes 'em with it. Thus, with their *Father* the Devil, they go about seeking whom they may devour. If they could *blast* a Man at once, and throw him into *Eternal Perdition*, no doubt they would do that too: they shew their Good-will to it by prosecuting with *Curses*, and thundering *Anathema's* against all that are not of their own Opinion and Party, consigning 'em over to *Eternal Damnation* as confidently as if they had the Keys of *Hell* in their possession. But since their *Power* is short of their *Malice*, and the Almighty has reserv'd to Himself the Determination of our eternal Condition; since He has made it impossible for them to pursue a Man any further than this World; they content themselves with doing him all the *Injury* they can here, following him to his very *Grave* with *Scandal* and *Obloquy*, and so often not suffering the *hated* Person to rest quiet there. But the Aggravations of this Sin will be best seen by shewing you, 1st, The *Injury* done to our Neighbour by taking away his reputation.

2^{dly}, The Difficulty of *restoring* it to him after we have taken it away.

3^{dly}, Because it defeats the only *justifiable* End of *Censure*.

4^{thly}, Because 'tis an Hindrance to the Good a Man might otherwise do in the World.

And the 1st Aggravation of *Censure* is the Injury done our Neighbour by taking away his Reputation.

Men justly set a great Value on their *Reputation*, it being so necessary, that there is little Comfort or Happiness without it. 'Tis that which gives a *Relish* to all our Enjoyments, and renders our Lives pleasant and easy to us. Without it all the conveniencies of this World would be miserably flat and insipid, and in comparison of it, Riches and Honour are deservedly despis'd. If a *Good Name* be better than *precious Ointment*, then certainly the Degree of Sin, in depriving another of it, must be proportionable to the *Loss* of so *valuable* a thing.

When *Job* lay under the Hand of God, and the severest Afflictions the Devil himself could bring upon him, he still comforted himself in his *Integrity*; but when that was call'd in question by his unmerciful Friends and miserable Comforters, his *Patience* was in greater danger than from all his other Misfortunes. This Accusation pierc'd his very *Soul*, whereas that was no way affected by the other less, tho' *intolerable* Miseries. The Loss of his Cattle, the Slaughter of his Servants, and the destruction of his Children, no nor the Soreness of his Disease, common both in its Nature and Misery, nor all the *Calamities* put together, that the Providence of God permitted to befall

besal him, did not so sensibly grieve the poor Man, nor extort from him so severe an Expression as the single Charge of HYPOCRISY: For at the 4th Verse of the 13th Chapter of his History, he tells 'em, they were *Forgers of Lies*, and Physicians of no value.

The sudden and *lamentable* Revolution in that Great as well as Good Man's Fortune, will teach us that the Best and Happiest of us all may soon be reduc'd to so low a Condition, that the Kindness of others may be necessary to our Support and Preservation; and tho' a tender Sense of *Pity* and *Compassion* be for the Benefit of the Distress'd implanted in our *Nature*, yet the good Opinion we have of the *Sufferer*, commonly recommends him to our *Beneficence*, and quickens our Care and Industry in his Relief. Marry a poor Man, whose Condition deserv'd *Consideration* and *Pity*, has, no doubt thro' an ill Character given of him, been less regarded than the Nature of his Wants requir'd. In speaking of other Men the greatest *Caution* is due. We know not what Injury we may do 'em when we undesignedly drop a Reflection upon 'em, nor at what distance of Time it may break out to their Disadvantage, and contribute to their Ruin.

But when a Reflection is *design'd* on purpose to do *Mischief*, when we *study* to prejudice our Neighbours in their Reputation, that, I think, is one of the greatest Aggravations of the *basest* of Sins. There is no Man out of the reach of Calumny. Those of the greatest Dignity, Power and Merit, are as subject to the Mischief of it as meaner People, and it has been the usual Method of their Adversaries to attack them this way. The Injury that is done by it is inconceivable. *Calumny* has a double ill Consequence when thrown upon *Great Men*: For when they fall a *Sacrifice* to the successful Malice of their Enemies, they are at once depriv'd of their *Power* and *Reputation*. It robs the State of their Service, and themselves of the Honour justly due to them for the faithful Discharge of the Trust committed to them. Their *spiteful Adversaries* know there is no other way to remove 'em from the Degree of *Favour* they are in, but by depriving 'em of their *Good Name*, on which as far as they can prevail, they fix a *lasting Reproach*. The *Calumny* affects 'em both *now* and *hereafter*, and is a perpetual Fund of *Infamy* for their Enemies to apply to 'em thro' the whole Course of their Lives. For the Mischief of Slander is not confin'd to the *present Time*, but is as extensive as a Man's Life, nay sometimes is a Disadvantage to *Posterity*. When *Calumny* has got the better of *Merit*, and *honest Men* are abus'd and rail'd out of *Power*, tho' perhaps it was meant at first only in prejudi-

their Power, and to remove 'em from their *Authority*, it affect their *Lives* afterwards, and reach and ruin their *Families*. It is to be fear'd the ill Consequences of this Vice either overlook'd, or the Nature of it misunderstood, else it would be the same Dread of falling into it, the same to avoid it, as there is to shun Murder, or any other most crying Sin. The Injury done by the *former* is little than by the *latter*, and I know no Reason why the *one* should not be as common as the *other*, if it be not owing to severer Laws made against *Murder*, that it is less frequent than *Slander*.

Ally, The Difficulty of restoring our Neighbour's Credit is another great Aggravation of *Censure*. For he that once lets a reflecting Story go out of his Mouth, puts it out of his own power to recall it, there being a scandalous Proneness in mankind to spread abroad any thing to the Disreputation of others. 'Tis such a Sin as will hardly admit of Repentance, *reparation* being a necessary part of it, which in this case is almost impossible to be made. For till every one that has heard of the *Censure* is convinc'd of the *Innocence* of the *injur'd* Person, the Scandal is not remov'd, neither is full Satisfaction possible. But the Misfortune is, that those Persons that employ their Tongues most in raising and spreading Scandals of others, commonly the least concern'd in endeavouring their *Supplication*. A Man must be void of all *Justice* and *Good-nature* before he can embark himself in so base a Sin, and will scarce have *Goodness* enough left in him to touch his Heart (if God will) with a Sense of the *Injury* of it. When once we set our selves to be led into this Sin by the *Author* of *Mischief*, we are to be so immediately employ'd in the Devil's own Work, that we will lose no Opportunity of engaging us further in his *Servitude*. It may be said of this Sin, as it is of rash Swearing, that some Men are so us'd to it, that they hardly know when they commit it; and then 'tis very unlikely they should make *reparation* for it, when they are scarce sensible they have been guilty. And in truth this Vice has of late Years got such hold among us, that one would think that those that exert themselves in it not only apprehended no *Guilt*, but concluded that they *merit* by it; and as the *Jews* formerly thought that they did God good Service by killing his Disciples, so there are some now who believe they are doing Service to God's Church, whilst they are depriving the most *eminent* Members of their *Reputation*. And how these Men will be brought to repent of that which they think their *greatest* *Vertue*, or if they should be inclin'd to it, how they will restore that *Credit* which they have so industriously ruin'd, I am at a loss to conceive.

Sure I am that it will require more Time, and cost more Trouble than they are aware of; and that if they will stay about it in good earnest, their Diligence must be at least as great in *repairing*, as it has been in *destroying* their Neighbour's Reputations.

3dly, Another great Aggravation of this Sin is, that it defeats the only *justifiable* End of *Censure*. For nothing can excuse the *censuring* our Neighbours Actions, but a Design of doing 'em good, and reforming their Lives by it. It has been commonly known that any good has been done upon a guilty Person by *publishing* his Crimes, and *proclaiming* his Infirmities. Sharp and severe Methods will rather *harden* and *confirm* him in his Wickedness than *reclaim* him from it. One that is really concerned for his Brother's Good will first try another Method. Before he offers his Interposition, he will consider whether the gentler way of admonishing him privately will not be more instrumental to his Recovery, than to prosecute him with sharp and bitter *Invectives*. That is the truest *Charity* which implies it self in *covering* Faults, not that which delights in *exposing* 'em. That Man's good Intention may justly be suspected who *rebukes* with *Osentation*; and he who seems to *glory* in objecting a long Catalogue of *Crimes* to his Brethren, will hardly clear himself from the Character of *rejoicing* in their *Iniquity*. Reproof loses its *Nature* and its *End* too, when it is given in a boasting manner, but especially when *Hatred* against the Persons appears to be the *prevailing* Cause that they are charged with the *Crimes* objected to them. Throwing out *general* Reflections will never do any *particular* Man good, and railing Accusations are unjustifiable when they are brought against the worst kind of Men, even those that despise *Government*, and are not afraid to speak evil of *Dignities*, as you may read in the second Chapter of the second Epistle to St. Peter.

If it be an express Command of the Scripture that all things be done with *Charity*, for which see the 16th Chapter of the 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians*, at the 14th Verse; then that *reproof* which is given in an *uncharitable* manner, and attended with bitter and provoking Expressions, is so far from being *justifiable*, that it is really *sinful*. That Man certainly must be void of all *Christian Charity*, who can in a *passionate* manner without any seeming Concern for their *unhappy* Case, but rather with an *Air of Satisfaction*, pronounce Eternal Damnation on his BRETHREN, tho' in his opinion *FALSE* ones. We are indeed *authoriz'd*, to declare such Persons *liable* to that *eternal* State, who persevere in the Commission of those *particular* Sins which are made *damnable* by the Gospel of Christ, but ha

Warrant to consign over to, or to leave in the *Company* of *Devil* and his *Angels*, those whom we *unjustly* or at least *doubtfully* conclude under a *general* Charge. The *Spirit* of the *Spel* is of another Strain: Instead of delivering an *inconsiderable* Person, one of the *greatest* of Sinners, over to *Satan*, and leaving him with him, the Scripture commands that he be delivered over to *Satan* indeed for the *Destruction* of the *Flesh*, but with this *merciful* Intention, that the *Spirit* may be saved the Day of the *Lord Jesus*, the *1st* of the *Corinthians*, the *Chapter*. Instead of *throwing* a Sinner into the Fire, it is *pulling* him out; and instead of *discovering* the *Spots* and *blemishes* of others, it is for *hiding* them *here*, in hopes they will be *wash'd* out by the *Blood* of the *Lamb* *hereafter*. But supposing the Crimes we undertake to censure to be *publick* and *notorious*, we are even then directed to do it in the *Spirit* of *Meekness*, and to consider our selves, lest we also be *tempted* or drawn into the like or greater Sins.

And if the Christian Religion enjoins us to observe such Caution in reprovng *visible* and *notorious* Crimes; if it be a Christian Duty to conceal *real* Faults, and to admonish the guilty Persons privately, lest *proclaiming* their Sins should harden and make 'em averse to our well meant *Instructions*; much more are we oblig'd to be silent when the *Opinion* we have taken up of our Neighbour's Guilt is *doubtful*, when perhaps ours may be *greater* than theirs, in so rashly pronouncing an *injurious* Judgment of them, when we conclude them *guilty* without *Proof*, and charge 'em with *Uncertainties*. And this must always be the *Case*, when Men judge one another's *Designs*, when they pretend to know what is in their Neighbours Hearts, and thence take occasion to speak all manner of *Evil* of them. We are not to *reprove* by *Conjecture*, nor *romantically* to encounter Faults that are no where but in our own *Brains*. We must be sure of the *Crimes* before we pronounce Judgment on the *Persons*, lest we shall our selves be guilty of *judging* according to *Appearance*, and our *Judgment* will be far from being *Righteous*. In this we transgress the Rules of *Charity* as well as *Judgment*, which thinketh no *Evil*, much less imputes it to them to whom there is *none*.

And this Caution of founding our Judgment right, is most requisite to be observ'd by the *Ministers* of the *Gospel* in the discharge of their *Ministerial* Duty. We are more particularly concern'd to speak the Words of *Truth* and *Soberness*; unless we are careful of this, we shall not be able to bear our *Reproofs* from the Imputation of *Calumny*, and *Evil* from that of *Fury*.

I come now to the last and greatest Aggravation of Contumacious Reflection, which is, that the taking away another's Reputation by false and malicious Insinuations, is a Means of hindring the Good which he might otherwise do in the World.

As little Faith as Men have in other matters, they fix themselves to be easily led into the Belief of any thing that will wound the Reputation of others. One scandalous Reflection upon 'em often repeated and boldly maintained will make a greater Impression on some People than the visible Integrity of the accus'd Persons whole Lives. The Discovery of a real, or but imaginary Error in Men of Power is one of the Triumphs of Ill-nature, and shall be sure to be expos'd with all the Pomp and Solemnity imaginable. And to what purpose is this done but to weaken their Reputations, and by begetting a Contempt of 'em in others, to render their Designs, tho' never so beneficial to Mankind, ineffectual?

This, if it falls on a good Man, tho' of a private Condition, is a very great Sin; but if it light on one in a public Station, it must be highly prejudicial to the Interest of God and Man, since it lessens that Power which might be ought to be employ'd to the Service of both.

But if it be levell'd at All in Authority, if the whole Government be at once spers'd and calumniated, and that a Minister of the Gospel in the Exercise of his Sacred Impulse, whose Business is of a very different Nature, I shall leave every one to judge of the Extensiveness of such a Crime, who is sensible of the Advantage of living under Government. And those that are sensible of the Benefit of Government in general (and who might, if they would be happy under the present?) are proper Judges what an Injury is done to the whole Community by reflecting on the Administration! What a Discouragement it is to them to proceed in their Labour for the Publick Good! what a continual Trouble and Vexation it gives 'em! what an Hindrance to the Peace and Welfare of the Community which they are continually intending! And when things go best find difficulty enough in securing them. And it is not to be doubted that those that make, and those that encourage Reflections against the Government, too well know the Consequences of 'em, and mean that Misfortune which they naturally tend to produce.

It is not to be wonder'd at, that an angry, discontented Person should undertake to asperse and blacken Ministers, who have all along shewn themselves Enemies to Dissension and Promoters of Union; but that the Revilers of the Government should be hug'd and caress'd where-ever

oes, that he should be conducted in *Triumph* and with *Acclamations* thro' part of the *Kingdom*, that his wicked *Slanders* should meet with such *Approbation* and *Encouragement* from great numbers of People of all *Ranks* and *Conditions*, is the most *astonishing* thing in the *World*. This is such a *Contradiction* to the *Christian Religion*, such an *Affront* to *Government*, that I want the *Spirit* of that *SLANDERER* to know by what *Name* to call it.

When the Maintainers of *absolute unconditional Obedience* so far forget themselves, as to *abet* and *encourage* the venting such *Slanders* and *Calumnies* against the *Government*, as in their Consequence tend to *Disobedience*, and are the constant Forerunners of *Rebellion*, it cannot be thought a *Defect* of *Charity* in any one to judge that their ill-govern'd *Zeal* has carried them from their *Principle*; and that by contending too earnestly for the *speculative* part of it, they have lost the *practical*.

I shall not pretend to *determine* which Party is in the Right as to the Subject of their Dispute, but sure I am that those are in the wrong of either side, who in defence of any *Principle* (especially if it be not essential to the *Christian Religion*, if it be not an Article of Faith) will suffer themselves to be carried from their *Duty* to the *Government*, to which they are by the same Religion oblig'd, and to set such an Example of *Disrespect* to *Authority*, as will render it cheap and contemptible, and lessen that *Awe* in the People, which is necessary to the Support of any *Government*.

There is one thing we are All agreed about, which is the *absolute Necessity* of *Government* it self, and there is another that ought to be as *universally allow'd*, that That cannot be secur'd, but by keeping up a *Respect* to those in *Authority*. Despising of *Power*, and speaking evil of *Dignities*, is the way to destroy 'em; and that *Preacher*, who endeavours to harangue the People into an ill Opinion of those entrusted with the *Power* of governing 'em, had as good tell 'em they have no need to be govern'd at all, that *Subjection* is no *Duty*, and that they may, if they please, free themselves from any *Restraint*. The Govern'd part of Mankind are too apt of themselves to take up ill Thoughts of the *Governing*, and there is need enough of constant *Lectures* of *Obedience* to be read to 'em; but when they hear their own *sedition* Thoughts encourag'd and confirm'd from the *Pulpit*, they remain no longer in doubt of the Truth of their *Suggestions*.

Sedition from the *Pulpit* has this peculiar *Malignity* in it, that

that by coming from that Place, it is as it were *consecrated*, and by being mixt and blended with Religious Duties, as it becomes a *Principle* in the Hearers, it assumes the Name of *Religion*, and pleads *Conscience* in its excuse: And then to what an *Heat* and *Fury* does it carry those who are so unhappy to be possess'd with it?

Let those Men that *approve* and *encourage* those impious Measures now, look back to the Beginning of the late *horrible Rebellion*, and they will perceive the Nation cou'd not have been blown up to such a *Fury* without the help of *Seditious Preaching*, and that the People of *England* did not cast off their Loyalty to the *King*, till they were taught from the *Pulpit* that 'twas their Duty to oppose him.

'Tis true this was then done by the *Dissenters* from our *Church*; but as we have always objected it to them as a *Crime*, so when the same thing is done by one of our own *Body*, let us acknowledge it to be a *Crime* still, and not undertake to *defend* that in *our selves*, which we have often with great Justice *condemned* in *others*: One would think a serious Reflection on the Prevalence of *Slander* in those *wicked Times*, and the *Confusion* it brought upon the *Nation*, should hinder Men from giving it so great Encouragement in these *good ones*, when every part of the *Legislature* keeps it self within just Bounds, and the whole *Administration* is according to Law.

But were there any Errors in the *Administration*, is this the way to *reclaim* 'em? No good Man certainly would take upon him to *calumniate* a Government in order to *amend* it. It might *provoke* and *exasperate* it, but cou'd not possibly have any good Effect. In such a Case we know our Duty, which is to betake our selves to *Prayers* and *Tears*, and to leave the rest to God *Almighty*, the Ruler of all Events. A good Man will not expose the Faults of a *Government*, if they have any, much less *impute* those to them which they have not.

It is a surprizing thing, that so many otherwise good Men should overlook the ill Consequences of *censuring* and *reflecting* on the *Administration*, and should be so far from setting themselves against it, as to look on it with *Pleasure* and *Approbation*.

Good Men may be led into a *Prejudice* to the *Administration*, by hearing continual *Slanders* and *Calumnies* thrown upon it, but one would think that all the Art of wicked Men should not bring them to *approve* and *defend* those *Slanders* when they lie before 'em, and they may read and see 'em. But to such an *Infatuation* are we got, whether as a Punishment

ent for our Sins God only knows, or whether it is brought out by the *Enemies* of the *Kingdom*, who are always upon the watch to improve and foment the *Jealousies* caused by these continual *Slanders*, that many Men who cannot but discern the ill Consequences necessarily resulting from their Practices, go into Measures which are neither for the *Honour* nor *Security* of the Nation. God knows what their End may be in them, but sure there must be something more than a Design to *preserve* the *Church*, which (God be prais'd) is in a *flourishing* Condition as it has been from the *Reformation* down to this Time.

Their confining Her Majesty's Title to the Crown to the *Hereditary Right*, by way of exclusion to that she has from the *Act of Settlement*, which at one Stroke brands the *Revolution* as *unlawful*, and *K. William's* Reign as an *Usurpation*, would give one too much Cause to doubt there is a Design form'd to *condemn* and *set aside* the *Revolution*, and to unsettle all that has since with so great Wisdom and Difficulty been done for the *Security* of the Nation. But because I am unwilling to charge 'em all with designing such Consequences as possibly only some of 'em might mean, I will charge 'em no further than their Actions will justify me, by leaving 'em to Answer for themselves.

Is this a Time to shew the Strength of an opposite Party? Is this a Time for *Fends* and *Animosities*, for *Strife* and *Contention* among our selves, when the *common Enemy* is brought to the last Extremity, when nothing can encourage him to continue the War, but a Prospect of a *Civil* one here, when the Nation is upon the point of being secur'd by an *honourable* and *lasting Peace*, in spite of the constant Opposition that has been given to those *glorious* Methods by which it has been hitherto preserv'd? Is this a time to teach the People to flight and condemn the *Determinations* of *Parliament*, by conducting a Person convicted of *High Crimes* and *Misemeanors* by that *August Assembly*, through the Kingdom in *Triumph*? I shall only say this is playing the *Masters* to the purpose: It is insulting and trampling upon Governours and Government: It is usurping the Judgment of that which has already received the Determination of the Highest Court of Judicature upon Earth.

I am aware that I shall meet with *Censure* my self, and be thought to transgress the Rules I would set others, because whilst I am directing my Discourse against *Censure* in general, I so particularly exercise that Talent my self: But I must, a Concern for *Government* in it self consider'd, and specially for the *prudent Administration* of it, we either do

or may live so happily under, will justify my expressing a zealous Warmth and Resentment against the *Favourers of Sedition*, and *Opposers of Government*; and in truth I cannot but think that those Men who prejudice the Government by encouraging Slanderers and Slanders against it, deserve to be rankt among the *Enemies* of it, whether they contribute to it through *Weakness* or *Malice*. And tho' we are oblig'd by Christian Charity not to censure our Neighbours publicly for Crimes that are of a *private* Nature, when there is no Danger from 'em to any one but themselves, and when concealing 'em may be a Means of reclaiming and bringing 'em to a Sense and Reformation of their Faults, yet when they are of a *publick* ill Influence, when the *Safety* of the whole Kingdom is concern'd in *discovering* and *exposing* 'em, in that case I take *censuring* and *reproving* 'em to be so far from being a *Crime*, that 'tis an *absolute* and *indispensable Duty*. A Duty particularly belonging to Us of the *Clergy*, whose undoubted Business it is to withstand and resist growing Sins, and when they become general and dangerous, to point out and expose 'em, that those committed to our Charge may neither be led into 'em through *Ignorance*, nor plead it for their Excuse, but being thoroughly warn'd of the *Evil* and *Danger* of the Course they are engag'd in, may either be brought to *Repentance*, or be left *inexcusable*.

If therefore there be any among you that have been guilty of this heinous Sin of *calumniating* and *defaming* the *Administration*, I beseech you to avoid the sad Consequences of it by a timely Reformation and Repentance, by imploying your Tongues for the future in praising and blessing God for his great Favour to you, in placing you under so *mild*, so *gracious*, so *merciful* a Government, by putting up your daily Prayers to the *Almighty* Disposer of all things, to grant Her Majesty a *long* Reign over us, to make it *prosperous* and *glorious* in the future Course of it, and to that end always to *bless* Her with such a *Ministry*, whose chief End is the Nation's Good, the *Security* both of Church and State; by endeavouring to approve your selves good Subjects to the *best* of *Queens* by a quiet and willing *Submission* to all in *Authority*, and striving to make Her Majesty's Reign easy and happy, by paying a cheerful *Honour* and *Obedience* to those, whosoever they are, she is pleased to entrust with the *Administration* of the *Affairs* of the Kingdom.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Glory, *Might*, *Majesty* and *Dominion*, both now, and for evermore. Amen.

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